

REMARKS

Applicants concurrently file herewith an Excess Claim Fee Payment Letter, and corresponding excess claim fee, for one (1) excess independent claim.

Claims 1-20 are pending in the application. Applicants have amended claims 1 and 7-11 to define the claimed invention more particularly.

It is noted that the claim amendments are made only for more particularly pointing out the invention, and not for distinguishing the invention over the prior art, narrowing the claims or for any statutory requirements of patentability. Further, Applicants specifically state that no amendment to any claim herein should be construed as a disclaimer of any interest in or right to an equivalent of any element or feature of the amended claim.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's indication that claim 9 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Accordingly, Applicants have amended allowable claim 9 into independent form. Applicants, however, respectfully submit that all of claims 1-20 are allowable.

Claims 1 and 5-7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Ito (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0103634 A1). Claims 2-4, 8, and 10-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ito.

Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections in the following discussion.

I. THE CLAIMED INVENTION

The claimed invention (e.g., as defined by claim 1) is directed to a play-back device.

The playback device includes a plurality of play-back sources, a first output unit and a second output unit for selecting at least one of the play-back sources to output play-back signals from the at least one of the play-back sources, a first operation unit for operations

relating to the first output unit, a second operation unit for operations relating to the second output unit, a control unit for deciding whether the first output unit and the second output unit have selected a common play-back source and whether the play-back signals from the common play-back source are in an output-stopped state and for inhibiting the release of the output-stopped state from the second operation unit in response to the control unit deciding that the play-back signals from the common play-back source are in an output-stopped state, and a priority setting unit for setting a priority for the first operation unit and the second operation unit.

Accordingly, the claimed invention can reliably prevent play-back signals from a common play-back source on the front side and the rear side from being released while the common play-back source is being selected (see Application at page 7, lines 14-20).

II. THE PRIOR ART REJECTIONS

The Examiner alleges that Ito teaches the claimed inventions of claims 1 and 5-7. Furthermore, the Examiner alleges that the teachings of Ito render obvious the claimed invention of claims 2-4, 8, and 10-20.

That is, Ito does not teach or suggest, “*a priority setting unit for setting a priority for the first operation unit and the second operation unit*”, as recited in exemplary claim 1, and similarly recited in exemplary claims 7, 8, 19, and 11.

According to the claimed invention of claims 1-7, if the output-stopped state of the play-back signals is set by the first operation unit, the output-stopped state cannot be released by operation of the second operation unit. In other words, the output-stopped state cannot be released by operation of an operation unit that is different from an operation unit setting the output-stopped state. Thus, the priority setting unit sets a high priority for an operation unit

setting the output-stopped state of the play-back signals.

According to the claimed invention of claims 8-14, if the output-stopped state of the play-back signals is set in response to the interruption signal, the output-stopped state cannot be released by operation of the operation unit of the lower priority, the priority being set in advance. Thus, the priority setting unit sets a priority with respect to the first operation unit and the second operation unit in advance.

These features are not taught or suggested by Ito.

Indeed, the Examiner does not even allege that Ito teaches or suggests this feature, which was similarly recited in dependent claim 9.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider and withdraw these rejections.

III. CONCLUSION

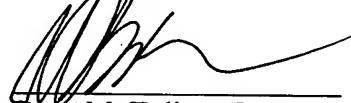
In view of the foregoing, Applicant submits that claims 1- 20, all the claims presently pending in the application, are patentably distinct over the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to pass the above application to issue at the earliest possible time.

Should the Examiner find the application to be other than in condition for allowance, Applicants request the Examiner to contact the undersigned at the local telephone number listed below to discuss any other changes deemed necessary in a telephonic or personal interview.

Applicants authorize the Commissioner to charge any deficiency in fees or to credit any overpayment in fees to Attorney's Deposit Account No. 50-0481.

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Respectfully Submitted,



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